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## THE SOCIOLOGICAL ERA.

M. E. ROBINSON.

THE fundamental equipment of the social engineer who seeks to adapt the individual to society and society to the individual is a knowledge of human desires, for these are the forces of which everyone's actions are the resultant. The leading discovery he will make in the pursuance of the quest is, that most people are trying to desire other people's desires, and that this process entails much waste of energy and complication of social problems. That is to say, if he is a Frenchman, he will make the discovery. British men of science are seldom either quick enough as observers or subtle enough as thinkers to do original work in psychology, which a good many of them vigorously condemn.

The truth is that John Bull sees solidity wherever he goes because he himself is solid, and makes, or used to make, solid things; just as melancholics think the world is gloomy because they are, and children will give a grown-up friend a birthday card representing a crude animal or a group of gay little revellers because that kind of picture appeals to themselves. Now human character is anything but solid. As a rule it is a shaky, theatrical structure that produces the illusion of authenticity in the casual spectator, but dissolves like a scenic make-believe before the keen gaze of the psychologist. M. Dromard, the exponent of sincerity, compares himself, as a student of character, to a connoisseur who should admire a handsome building, bold in architecture and massive to the eye, but is startled to find, on closer inspection, that no small part of its framework is composed of wormeaten timbers, mouldering walls, and extraneous ornaments. He detects but few 'opposable' elements, genuine aptitudes, and effective tendencies in people. His

explanation is, that everybody is constantly imposing himself on everybody else.

Everyone tends to regard his own life as quite an essential part of life as a whole; and in order to satisfy himself on this point he forms a very characteristic idea of the world at large as a sphere, all the movements of which revolve round what he himself deems good. A priest naturally thinks that a day devoted to prayer is a well-spent day; a soldier will tell you quite seriously that one's life is supremely useful if it is employed in running the risk of losing it, and in taking away other people's lives; the merchant will have little difficulty in believing that following the ups and downs of the market represents the best possible account which a human being could give of himself, and that compared with the most insignificant transaction on the stock exchange, the masterpiece of a master artist is a bagatelle and a mere amusement; a woman of the world who has performed her toilet and rattled through several silly conversations in quite a number of drawing-rooms, doubts not for a moment that she has done some useful work, and never dreams that there is anything better to do in life than doing nothing.

In the twentieth century, which is to be the sociological era, priest and soldier, trader and poet, idler and worker, will discover one another. But let them look for no infallible guidance on the path of their inquiry. In the field of psychology every student must be an explorer, and something of an artist; for investigating it is like journeying through a land of surprises the features of which alter in correspondence with the permanent character and passing moods of every traveller who ventures into its intricate wastes and wilds, or lingers to look at its peaceful plains and cultivated gardens. No man is the same to any two other men; and no one can predict what others will be to us, or what we shall make of them for ourselves.

When everyone is a Nansen or a Columbus in this magic region of the mind, no one will ever utter a word of praise or blame about anyone else, and pride and shame alike will pass away. Then the world will be a vastly more interesting and enjoyable place than it is now, for it will present infinite variety and yet be perfectly peaceful. At present we all go about expecting others to be like ourselves and morally disapproving of them if they

are not. A very sociable person who makes generous demands upon his friends and consciously or unconsciously gets a good deal out of them, will say to a reserved and retiring comrade who has a kindly and unselfish nature, "*I don't shut myself up. I think it makes one selfish and narrow.*" And the latter will answer, "*I don't dissipate my attention. I want to get some work done.*" The simple truth is, of course, in the first case, "*I like society*"; in the second, "*I like solitude.*"

Again, the late Viscountess Harberton used to go out in a knickerbocker suit which was neat and comfortable, if not artistic; and people used to say, as she passed by, "*How unwomanly, how vulgar she is!*" What they should have said was, "*How unlike me!*" As a matter of fact, she was extremely modest, and very capable as a wife and mother; and she had the straightforward independence of an unspoilt child. Women who wanted to adopt the skirtless garb themselves would say, when they saw her wearing it in the street, "*How courageous!*"

In two of the most important departments of thought and action, politics and religion, reasoning is almost invariably of the type illustrated in these two examples, from which it appears that truth consists in human desires realizing themselves. Each man creates it for himself and like himself; and as he passes through the secular changes to which all living creatures are subject, so truth undergoes the regular processes of growth, culmination, and decay by which it adapts itself to him, who is neither animal nor angel, but simply man. The biologist imagines that eugenic perfection would necessarily constitute a fine race of men. But he would find it disappointing compared with the results brought about by the fierce patriotism of the German and Italian, the Welshman and American of to-day; for there is a will element in race-building without which scientific sufficiency would be

As fruitless as a stream which still  
Slips through the wheel of some old ruined mill.

Darwin and Huxley, Chopin and Schumann, Nelson and Stevenson, did great work because they liked it, not because they were among the objectively 'fit.' They never allowed themselves to be paralyzed by

That frost of fact by which our wisdom gives  
Correctly stated death to all that lives.

Men of meaner powers trust their desires less faithfully and follow them out with less persistency. Canon Liddon, for instance, went through agonies of self-teasing every time an appointment was offered him; and on one occasion he actually wanted his Bishop to command him to accept the proffered promotion. He was forever seeking some truth-outside-himself which wasn't there. It never occurred to him that the truth so far as he was concerned could be actualized only by himself, and only by experiment. And so he was constantly striving after some duty which might enable him to escape self-determination, some convenient system of ready-made decisions which would spare him from perplexity, and yet be very respectable. No wonder Gabriel Tarde, observing self-deceptions of this nature, described duty as a device for evading responsibility for non-success in any undertaking, whether of charity or self-help. The Canon, able but diffident, was prevented from seizing opportunities not by a dead weight of moveless fact, but by his own wish and will.

Similarly, it is by the will of the community that social diseases exist. Insanity, alcoholism, dishonesty, prostitution, brutality, class hatred, all could be abolished by a people who really intended to get rid of them.

It is by choice, again, and not by destiny, that women are not soldiers. Wherever they have received a military training, as in Brittany and England in early times, and in Arabia and Abyssinia, South America and the Antilles, Dahomey and Uganda, they have done themselves credit as warriors. During the Polish Insurrection of 1863 numbers of women fought heroically on many a battle-

field; and one of them, Mlle. Postavoïtow, won a high position of command: and in the French Revolution Olympe de Gouges, Pauline Léon, Mme. Feurier and other women leaders brought together hordes of warrior women who did excellent military service. Women do not want to go to war in this age and this country because the whole circumstances of their lives have made the profession disagreeable to them.

Circumstances, personal and ancestral, so differentiate one human being from another, that no one, by rights, can be compared with anyone else, and that everyone is lovable to someone. In many circles of intellectual folk at the present time, Becky Sharp, in all probability, would not be wicked or unnatural, but beneficent and amiable; while the Madonna type of woman, seemly as it is in most other circles, would be depressing and unlovely. Mr. William McDougall has expressed an admiration of the latter which has led him to regard the maternal instinct as the source in general of the highest joys and noblest virtues of humanity, and in particular of the impulse to deal out equity to others. And yet he notes that a mother will be indignant if anybody insinuates that her child is not the most beautiful object in the world. But suppose it is ugly—to others. If she acts all her life as if it were beautiful, is she likely to do justice either to the child or her neighbors? We smile at the mother who told the schoolmaster that she had not quite decided what her son's career was to be, but she thought she would like him to become a cabinet minister, or perhaps a judge or a newspaper editor. If we realized all the confusion, corruption, and injustice which emanate from such preconceived notions, we should be more inclined to cry. How many a child would be deeply thankful if he need not hide his real difficulties and failings from his mother! How many a clever but shy girl would be glad if she could tell her meek-spirited mother that she wanted to be an astronomer or an engineer! How many a frank, good-natured boy, clever in quite other

ways, would rejoice if he could tell his proud-spirited mother that he would give anything to be a tradesman or a gardener!

As a rule the woman's experience of the world is so narrow, and her imagination so limited in consequence, that she has no understanding of the varied media in which her children live, either at school or in business, and therefore, as Mr. McDougall admits, can offer them no sympathy. Most readers will remember Mr. Arnold Bennett's fine study of a mother and son in "The Old Wives' Tale"; and how on one occasion the former fervently thanks a youth who in reality has taught her boy no small amount of iniquity, for his benedictory friendship to her family.

Very often women have a definite logic of conduct, non-conformity to which they regard as wicked. Now M. Paulhan has observed how readily we all acknowledge the necessity and propriety of actions and events simply because they have happened, and how easily, if we discover that they did not really take place, we come to believe in the eternal necessity of what actually did happen. The experiential conditions of thought and conduct make a substantial difference between the logic of one man's behavior, with the system of opinions that are consonant therewith, and that of another; insomuch that anyone who does not possess the somewhat rare gift of catholic sympathies must have extensive sociological knowledge to understand how the subjective and the environmental factors are related to one another in the acts of others. By those elements, which are variable, their conduct and convictions are completely determined. Therefore the fact that a man is churchman or nonconformist, conservative or socialist, Englishman or Japanese, ought to be the source of neither hauteur nor humility to him, but of pure, childlike pleasure. No action or belief can be wrong in the sense that it is unnatural or could have been otherwise under the circumstances, though it may be wrong according to the onlooker's interpretation.

Thieving is quite right as far as the thief is concerned, for there is no disposition that is inherited so surely as that of stealing. Almost without exception, children whose parents have this characteristic,—which is a survival, no doubt, from an age when robbery was honorific—will instinctively lay their hands on other folk's property if they can by any means get the opportunity. As far as possible, therefore, society should withdraw all such opportunity; and should see to it that born thieves have no descendants. As Novicow has remarked, a theft must be the work of two parties at least, the thief and his victim. If the latter is not as clever in protecting his goods as the former is in securing it, he must expect to be robbed. The miseries from which the community suffers are due almost as much to the stupidity, ignorance, and carelessness of 'the innocent' as to the cunning of 'the guilty.' Children should be taught that everyone they meet may be a swindler, or some other kind of scoundrel, just as he may be the most beneficent person in the world; and that if it is the knavish and sinister part of his nature that comes into play in his dealings with them, the 'fault' is partly their own. Conversely, they should learn to feel no resentment if they see that others have taken precautions against them which amount to an impeachment of their character; for if all the devices that human ingenuity could contrive were brought into requisition to prevent or defeat evil, it could not exist. Moral indignation is one of the most fruitful sources of the sin and suffering of the world, since it drives infamy beneath the mask of hypocrisy and into the secret infernos of society where alone it can flourish. The study of human character is difficult in the extreme; and to expect that everyone we come across shall know us so thoroughly as to be convinced of our goodwill and honesty, is to require that he shall have mastered it to the minutest detail.

The only certainty we should look for in the wonderful story-book of social psychology is the greatest possible



variety and the most exciting adventures. The great value of M. Paulhan's studies in psychology consists in his classification of 'characters' according to the way in which their component parts are associated in the balance of the whole. That principle enables him to put order into a set of observations that of necessity are extremely diversified, and to see that no two characteristics, such as frankness and sincerity, calmness and accuracy, cruelty and cowardice, are ever invariably found together. Let us discard the rigid apparatus of judgments and comminations, rewards and punishments, which we all carry about with us to avoid having to be independent, courageous and observant, and we shall have what Mr. McDougall terms primitive sympathy. Our minds are the theatre of a ceaseless reverberation and reflection from what we see and hear. Smile answers smile on the faces of the friends and the strangers we meet, and frown answers to frown; and sunshine calls forth gladness in the heart, while tempest inspires fear and melancholy. The appeal to sympathy, indeed, is made by suggestion, an instrument for utilizing the desire forces of the people for good which has a potency as tremendous in the psychic as the dynamo and the steam-engine have in the physical sphere. If men and women used it freely, they would be as charming and fresh as the child with the Christmas card; and wiser withal, for suggestion can be employed aright only after careful observation and analysis. Find out the particular kind of suggestion to which a given individual will respond, and you will be able so to manipulate his attention that nothing base or mean ever enters into his thoughts and gets translated into conduct. It is only in cases of insanity that the mind runs persistently on unwholesome topics.

To take an example of educational suggestion,—a boy loves piano-playing and neglects his lessons for it. The father, tyrannically moral, forbids him to touch the piano; the mother, timidly moral, sometimes allows him

to, but with protests. In other words, the latter suggests 'ought' to the boy, the former 'must.' His mood is hostile to both, and the suggestions undergo a Hegelian conversion which turns them respectively into 'shan't' and 'won't.' Then the child feels that his self-respect is involved in maintaining his position, and a wearisome war sets in between him and the parents. But suppose they had said, when he first began the piano-playing, "Yes, music's lovely. We'll have a tune first, just a little one, to put you in a good temper, and then you shall do your lessons. And you'll do them well because the playing will have given you such a lot of energy, and you'll feel so brave and manly for having made yourself attend to the lessons when you wanted to play. Then you might play a little afterwards to reward yourself. Or would you rather do the French and algebra first and have the reward afterwards?"

By making suggestions like these, implying some imaginative enjoyment of his pursuits on their part, and by enlisting his interest in what brings him the satisfaction of self-esteem, the parents could not only train the boy's will and make him like doing right, but also teach themselves what his native disposition and endowments were. Sooner or later faithful observation and unobtrusive coöperation with him would bring them down to the bedrock of his character. In all probability they would not find the music there. But if they did, if it were not a passing fancy, but a genuine passion that sustained his attention and called forth spontaneous efforts from him, they would have to treat it as one of the primal desire forces which, whether they bring weal or woe, poverty or wealth, can never be changed or diminished, though they may be guided into desirable channels.

There would not be much evil in the world, or much of the slackness and sentimentalism that the public policy of the day is instilling into the working folk, if wrongdoers and malcontents alike were dealt with on the assumption that they meant to do right, and the only ques-

tion were how to attain that end. Sermons and moralizations, punishments and reproaches will be useless where an employer or teacher might achieve excellent results by saying, "Oh, I know how you could have done it," or, "Let's see how you forgot and can make yourself remember next time." Many a labor dispute might have been avoided if the capitalists had met the very first application for a minimum wage that was put before them not by opposition, which directly suggests corresponding opposition, but by some such reply as this: "We have never dreamt of the possibility of such a thing, and naturally it seems utterly impracticable to us. We will study the matter closely. And you too go away and think about it. Afterwards, if you still want it, let us adopt the minimum wage by way of experiment, do our best to make it a success; and if it answers, put it permanently on trial." Failing such agreements, employers and politicians have had to become extremely deferential to and laudatory of the workman. They must never insinuate that, like any common rich person, a laborer could possibly be incompetent, or produce a family of defectives who ought to be confined in colonies, or commit any other unsocial act.

As the light of the sociological era broadens from dawn into day, the members of the different social classes will regard each other with interest and appreciation, and feel that vainglory and guilt alike have passed from the earth as a nightmare glides away with the darkness. The women are dull of intellect because the real springs of their desires, which are not always, perhaps not often, centred in sex, or in wifehood and motherhood, are seldom discovered. But there will be no dullness, even among women, in a world where all are free to express their joy in whatever interests them unrebuked, and where everybody will acquire some skill,—at school, it is to be hoped,—in diverting the thoughts of others from all such joys as are truly harmful to society. Even the common routine of the day's work might be entertain-

ing if everyone made perfect sincerity possible for everyone else. Thus a couple of strangers might meet in a restaurant and initiate a conversation in this way: A. I'm rather a talkative person and hate an unsociable meal. Will you let me talk to you? B. Yes, by all means. I'm sociable, too. But I don't like the look of you at all. A. Oh, that's interesting. I *am* rather a shabby-looking man; and ugly too, they tell me. I wonder what sort of people attracts you, and how you came by your standards of beauty and goodness and so on. Do you find that faces which you didn't like at first afterwards become agreeable to you?

Then each conversationist would tell the other scraps of social history which were quite new to the other, and anything but insipid. We all miss a good deal of both knowledge and amusement by rendering life spectacular and insisting on making all our acquaintances pretend to resemble or correspond to ourselves. There is twenty times more originality in ordinary men and women, and twenty times more virtue in extraordinary ones than we ever make use of. Many and many a great man has been prevented from giving of his best to the world by the sense of "isolation drear and deep" which their contempt and neglect have impressed upon him, only to give place to extravagant admiration when his day's work is done, and he is beyond the need of human sympathy and goodwill. "When I was poor and sick and hungry," wrote Heine in a moment of deep discouragement, "there was one brave man who stood up to defend me; and one kind hand was stretched out to help me. That man was myself, and that hand was my own."

If men did not cherish so tenaciously the absolutisms and misoneisms which are really egotisms, their own curiosity would lead them to take an interest in the man who shows some originality; and self-assertion on his part would be needless. Sympathy guided by sociological knowledge, indeed, would make all unpleasant forms of self-assertion unnecessary, and cut the social ground

from every kind of lie which hides the causes of human sufferings—lies told by preachers and orators, merchants and financiers, biographers and historians. All the ills that accrue from competition and the rush for riches, from ‘conspicuous wealth’ and ‘conspicuous leisure,’ would vanish. There would be no despised occupations and no downtrodden toilers; and the nervousness of the age of self-advertisement would pass away like a feverous dream.

It is again to the imagination of M. Paulhan that one must appeal by way of pleading the possibility of the sociological era.

It is not at all impossible that a civilization may come into being in which all the ideas and sentiments that now constitute our conceptions of right and duty, of responsibility and moral sanctions, may disappear. Their very names might be forgotten; and a civilization might arise in which no mention was ever made of right or duty, authority or responsibility, nay of morality itself and of good and evil. Nevertheless would there still be series of coördinated phenomena, systematizations and harmonies; doubtless also, discords and incoherences; and problems which would be none the less problematic for having presented themselves in fresh forms. Preferences there would always be. And the chances are that a society in which morality was never discussed at all, actual conduct would be more ‘moral’ than it is among peoples who are constantly talking about questions of morality. We should always be able to construct a system of values in such a community, and weigh its elements against one another as contributing more or less to the establishment of more comprehensive ends, loftier ideals, and more progressive ideas.

In all the nations to-day a deafening clamor is arising for mental expansion and individual development. And nothing can still that strife of tongues and restore the calm in which alone great public problems can be solved, but the realization that whatever his particular desires may be, everyone’s general desire is not to thwart his neighbor, but to get good for himself: and this good is so different from that of every other man, that it need not be achieved at another’s expense. It is not beyond the power of science to devise a social mechanism which makes a just provision for the wants of all. But the desire to see “the glory of a nature satisfied” in every face,

and to communicate one's own gladness to others, must always be the driving force that creates and works the machinery. And as the spirit of domination gives way to the spirit of primitive sympathy, that force will grow stronger and stronger, and more and more effective. The discords between man and man are superficial, noisy, and ephemeral; the concord is fundamental, quiet, and lasting. Social antipathies "are sovereignly unjust, for all the parties are human beings with the same essential interests, and no one of them is the wholly perverse demon which another often imagines him to be. Both are loyal to the world that bears them; neither wishes to spoil it, neither wishes to regard it as an insane incoherence; both want to keep it as a universe of some kind; and their differences are all secondary to this deep agreement."

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LONDON, ENGLAND.

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## IS IT MUST OR OUGHT?

EZRA B. CROOKS.

AT the last Spring meeting of the Western Philosophical Association, held at the University of Chicago, the question which elicited most warmth in discussion was the one proposed above. Each of the principal protagonists said in summing up that it was his custom to ask of his students in the beginning of the ethics course, "What do you want?" When the unpragmatic one confessed this, the evident sentiment was that he had given up all sanctions of authority and in effect joined the enlightened ranks of the present day ethical relativists. In this meeting all things idealistic were as the green things of Pharaoh's Egypt; what the pragmatists left the realists ate.

But I am wondering if the case is as serious with idealistic ethics, and with idealism in general, as the climate